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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

EAST TIMOR
Point 10 - Torture and Disappearances

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

My name is Donaciano Gomes, I am 21 years old and I am a student. My family left East Timor on the 6th of September last with the help of the International Red Cross.

I was 6 years old when East Timor was invaded by the Indonesian Armed Forces on 7 December 1975. I was in Dili, with my mother and my brothers; my father was in hospital at the time because of an accident in which he broke his foot. There was a football pitch near our house which served as an assembly point for Indonesian troops: both paratroopers landing in Dili and infantry disambarking from warships. Those Timorese who passed near this area, mainly women and children going to seek refuge at the Motael church, were killed by the Indonesians. We didn't leave our house for 15 days.

When I could go out, I came upon bodies in the streets, at times eaten by animals. On the beach nearest to us, a number of bodies were washed up on the sand; with a number of other children of my age and under the instructions of a Timorese nurse, I buried many of the bodies at the beach in the sand.

In 1981, all able-bodied men between 15 and 60 years of age were conscripted by the Indonesians into their forces for a major operation against the resistance. Various members of my family participated in that operation, serving as live shields for the Indonesian soldiers. I was still very young and was not taken off.

In 1989, numerous Timorese were imprisoned and tortured in preparation for the visit of Pope Paul II to East Timor. Lt Col Prabowo, President Suharto's son-in-law, personally tortured Ildefonso Araújo, breaking a leg and his teeth.

The climate of terror did not impede a demonstration taking place at the end of the mass celebrated by the Pope on 12 October.

Immediately after the Pope had left, the repression came down upon us. There were numerous imprisonments: two of my friends, Jacob Xavier and Virgilio Costa, were detained at Senopati III, a commando barracks, and were tortured on the orders of Col Bimo, operational chief of the Secret Service at the time. I escaped this fate by hiding for some nights in the

woods near Dili. But knowing that the military had threatened to take my family hostage, I sought refuge in the Catholic Bishop's residence on 26 October.

There were about 38 young people there already. The military commander, Gen Mulyadi, the head of the Secret Service, Col Bimo, the Civic Governor and the Vice-Governor, - all Indonesians except for the Civic Governor - tried to make us come out, but the Bishop, Monseignor Belo, took the responsibility upon himself for our protection.

The tension built up and on 4 November, knowing of the danger to the life of the Bishop, the people came together around the episcopal residence to defend the Bishop and the young people who were taking refuge there. The occupying forces sent two armoured cars and about 1,500 soldiers to disperse the demonstrators.

On the following day, the military commander and officers entered the Bishop's house and threatened to take away the Bishop if we did not come out of our own accord. We came out, after the commander had promised us in front of the Bishop that we would not be tortured and that after a short interrogation would be set free.

We were taken by bus to the police station and the Bishop came with us. In the interrogations the police were replaced by soldiers of the "Red Beret" commandos. Afterwards the majority of my companions were indeed released as promised, but José Manuel Fernandes, Francisco Maria da Sousa, Clementino Faria, Guilherme Pereira, António Pereira Lopes, Lourenço Pereira and I were taken to four different military installations in succession. In each of these locations we were tortured. The first blow I received came from the military commander himself, Gen Mulyadi. I was tortured by Col Naingolan and other military from Intelligence: burns from cigarettes, electric shocks, a dagger stuck in my back, blows to the head, gun muzzles pointed at my chest, head and in my mouth. My friends suffered in the same manner. Our tormentors wanted us to accuse the Timorese priests of having instigated the demonstrations during the Pope's visit. The interrogations and torture lasted 15 days.

On 17 January 1990, hundreds of young people protesting against the repression and calling for our release, demonstrated in front of John Monjo, the North American Ambassador who was visiting Dili. Major Heri took me from my cell and brought me to where the demonstration was taking place so that I would appeal to the demonstrators to go back to their homes. I refused, responding that they were doing precisely what I myself had done. One of the demonstrators, Julião Mau-Siri, was taken away by Col Gatot, Col Bimo's successor as head of the Secret Service, who later showed me my companion with his head bloodied and bayonet marks on his back, but I did not give in. They then threatened to finish us off. Major Heri also insisted that I should identify the demonstrators I had seen.

On February 6 I was set free, under obligation to present myself every week at Senopati II. All those who have been

imprisoned have to present themselves regularly and listen to speeches on the integration of East Timor within the Republic of Indonesia.

On the eve of my departure, on 4 September, the Timorese held another demonstration in favour of independence at the end of a mass celebrated by the Papal Nuncio to Jakarta, Monseignor Francesco Canalini, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Dili diocese. The Indonesians responded in the same manner, prison and torture. Some hundreds of people were imprisoned at this time.

Special troops, brought especially from Java in Indonesia, began making masked attacks on people at night on the streets of Dili. The military campaigns against the resistance which has been fighting for 15 years in the mountains have also been intensified in recent times.

That which I have seen and suffered, is what all our people have been experiencing and endured for 15 years, as prisoners in our own land. The United Nations recognises our right to self-determination, but what does it do to defend us? We would hope that the laws and principles of international law would be valid for all.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, before finishing up I would like to make an appeal to the members of this Commission on Human Rights that the situation of José Manuel da Silva Fernandes, 21 years old, a student at St. José Catholic High School in Dili, be investigated. He was one of the six who were prisoners with me last year. On 17 October his house was broken into, he was taken away and up to the present his whereabouts are unknown. It is just one case among so many, but even so, I cannot refrain from appealing for your intervention because he is my friend.

Mr Chairman, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you for the attention with which you have heard me.

Donaciano Gomes

Geneva - United Nations Commission on Human Rights - February 1990

NOTE:

Due to time contraint I do not read out the full text, which I shall distribute afterwards to the Members of the Commission.